

What is Claimed Is:

1. An airbag device comprising:
an airbag for being inflated in a predetermined direction upon deployment; and
a guide that cooperates with the airbag causing the airbag to deploy in the
predetermined direction as the airbag is being inflated.
2. The airbag device of claim 1 wherein the airbag includes at least one panel and a
follower associated with the panel and the guide for causing airbag deployment in the
predetermined direction.
3. The airbag device of claim 2 wherein the guide comprises an elongate member for
being attached to a vehicle portion along which the airbag is to deploy, and the follower
comprises an annular member extending about the elongate member for riding therealong as
the airbag is deployed.
4. The airbag device of claim 1 wherein the airbag includes a casing in which the airbag
is folded prior to deployment and a cover for the container that is opened as the airbag is
inflated, and
a cover for the guide to protect the guide against fouling with foreign materials.
5. The airbag device of claim 4 wherein the airbag includes a follower that rides along
the guide during airbag deployment.
6. The airbag device of claim 5 wherein the guide cover includes a frangible portion that
the follower ruptures as the follower rides along the guide.
7. The airbag device of claim 5 wherein the guide cover includes an opening that
extends along the guide with the follower extending through the opening as the follower rides
along the guide.

8. The airbag device of claim 1 wherein the airbag has a generally U-shaped configuration including a base portion and opposite side portions with the guide causing the airbag side portions to deploy in the predetermined direction.
9. An externally developed airbag device for being deployed along pillars on either side of a vehicle windshield, the externally developed airbag device comprising:
 - an airbag that includes portions deployed along each pillar;
 - elongate guide members that extend along respective vehicle pillars; and
 - followers of the airbag portions that ride along the respective guide members as the airbag is inflated.
10. The externally developed airbag device of claim 9 wherein the guide members comprise rods and the followers comprise annular straps.
11. The externally developed airbag device of claim 9 wherein the guide members include elongate covers configured to allow the followers to ride along the guide members associated therewith.
12. The externally developed airbag device of claim 11 wherein the covers each include a longitudinally extending tear line with the respective followers rupturing the guide cover tear lines as the followers ride along the associated guide members.
13. The externally developed airbag device of claim 11 wherein the covers each include a longitudinally extending opening with the respective followers extending through the openings to allow the followers to ride along the associated guide members.
14. The externally developed airbag device of claim 13 wherein the guide covers include overlapping wall portions at the opening to minimize access of foreign materials to the guide members.
15. The externally developed airbag device of claim 11 wherein the covers are secured to the vehicle to span a joint line formed between the pillars and windshield.

16. The externally developed airbag device of claim 9 including a removal means for substantially keeping the guide members free of foreign materials.
17. The externally developed airbag device of claim 16 wherein the removal means comprises either a wiping means or a heating means.